

THE DIRECTOR OF
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

National Intelligence Council

NIC #01479-88
21 April 1988

NOTE FOR: DCI
DDCI

FROM: Fritz W. Ermarth
Chairman

It is likely but not certain that the Senate will ratify the INF treaty before the Moscow summit. I asked [redacted] A/NIO/USSR, for a judgment as to whether a delay of ratification might jeopardize the summit -- a possibility the Soviets have hinted about in the past. Attached [redacted] excellent summary on this issue; it includes a few points from the European perspective. 25X1

Fritz W. Ermarth
Fritz W. Ermarth

Attachment:
As stated

cc: DDI
D/SOVA
C/DO/SE

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A/NIO/USSR

WILL A DELAY IN INF RATIFICATION PUT THE SUMMIT AT RISK?

There is general agreement in the intelligence community that a delay in INF ratification under the scenario that now seems most likely to produce it--a dispute between the White House and the Senate over an amendment that would bind future Administrations regarding interpretation of the treaty--would not lead the Soviets to cancel or postpone the President's scheduled visit:

-- The dispute poses something of a dilemma for the Soviets. Their sympathies lie with Senate proponents of the amendment, but their overriding priority is expeditious ratification of the treaty.

-- An old-style Soviet leadership might have postponed the visit; this leadership would be more likely to see its interests as served by taking the high road. They would count on the pressures of public opinion at home and in Western Europe to resolve the dispute expeditiously.

-- Tactically, Moscow has a strong incentive to hold the summit before preparations for the national conference of party officials in late June--a watershed political event for Gorbachev--begin to interfere.

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Moreover, Moscow would be likely to regard this dispute over interpretation as temporary and resolvable.

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-- Moscow's response would be primarily rhetorical. Both the President and the Senate would probably take some heat--the President for allegedly genuflecting to the American right-wing and the Senate for throwing a road block in the way of arms control. Judging from past precedent--a slim lead to go on with this leadership--the Soviets would probably also delay their own ratification process.

-- While we are reasonably confident of this judgment, we cannot be certain. The Soviets want the summit to produce

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concrete results, and they appear to be genuinely irritated by what they see as U.S. backtracking on understandings reached at the Washington summit on START issues as well as Afghanistan. They could calculate that proposing a temporary delay could be a relatively painless way to signal dissatisfaction while improving the prospects that the summit would eventually prove to be productive. Such a scenario would be more likely if Gorbachev's political position in the leadership were to weaken (recent events suggest that in fact his position is strengthening).

West European Reaction

A decision by the President to kick the treaty back would produce barely a ripple in West Europe if it appeared to be a relatively short-term procedural dispute. If it threatened to significantly delay ratification or put the future of the treaty in doubt, on the other hand, it would provoke a strong reaction:

-- With their parliamentary tradition, the Europeans would fail to appreciate how the fine points of presidential and constitutional law involved in the dispute could be allowed to stand in the way of speedy ratification.

-- They would be unlikely to take sides on the dispute itself. Instead, they would treat the episode as the latest example of vacillating American attitudes toward arms control and the inability of the United States to exert clear and consistent leadership of the Western alliance.

-- Reaction could be particularly strong in West Germany, where Foreign Minister Genscher and other officials have muted concerns about the treaty in order to help smooth the ratification process.

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